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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/71 C of 12 December 1995. In that resolution, the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to seek new alternative ways of financing the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (Lomé) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lima), to continue to provide all necessary support to them in fulfilling their mandates; to ensure that their directors are, as far as possible, locally based in order to revitalize their activities; and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the resolution. The report briefly describes the administrative and financial situation of the centres, suggests alternative means of financing them and includes concise accounts of their activities from July 1995 to June 1996.

2. A statement made by Spain, on behalf of the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, in an explanation of vote after the adoption of the above resolution, is annexed to the report, as requested by them. The United States of America associated itself with both the statement and the request that it be annexed to the report.

II. SITUATION OF THE CENTRES AND ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF FINANCING THEM

3. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established in 1986, and the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1988. They function under the auspices of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations Headquarters.

4. I have repeatedly underlined the importance of fostering the regional approach to disarmament, and wish to seize the opportunity presented by this report to reiterate this view. The approach is gaining ground theoretically and operationally. Regional Powers and entities have begun to see the benefit of assuming more responsibility for the maintenance of security in their respective regions. I remain convinced that the regional centres, if adequately funded and staffed, could be creative institutions of regional cooperation to foster a climate for the promotion of sustainable peace and development. They could contribute to regional disarmament efforts and to fostering confidence-building and transparency measures, including the consideration of developing regional registers of conventional weapons, at the request of the States concerned.

5. Despite my previous appeals, the centres continue to lack adequate financial resources and are not able to function in the manner intended by the General Assembly. Voluntary contributions for the Lomé and Lima centres have remained insufficient.

6. Since the submission of my previous report on the subject (A/50/380), voluntary contributions in the amount of US$ 12,333.33 have been pledged to the

Lomé Centre. As of July 1996, a total of US$ 27,133.86 has been received, including pledges for the year 1995. I wish to express my gratitude to the Governments of Finland, Norway, South Africa and Sweden for their contributions, and to the host country for its support of the Centre.

7. Voluntary contributions in the amount of US$ 11,833.33 have been pledged to the Lima Centre. As of July 1996, a total of US$ 7,776.33 had been received, including prior pledges for 1994 and 1995. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Governments of Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Panama and Sweden for their contributions, and to the host country for its support.

8. The ongoing financial crisis of the United Nations and the consequential demands for cost-cutting measures have made it necessary to freeze for the biennium the post of Director of the Lomé Centre, which has been vacant since the resignation of the incumbent in July 1992. Responsibility for the daily management of the Centre has therefore been assumed by an officer-in-charge (research assistant). The Centre has been operating with a skeleton local staff at the General Service level since that time.

9. With much regret, I was obliged to suspend the activities of the Lima Centre at the end of June 1996 until further notice owing to the fact that there were insufficient funds to cover the costs of the salary of the only staff member working at the Centre, and of the planned operational activities for the second half of 1996. Since August 1993, responsibility for the Centre had been assumed by a local staff member at the General Service level. No other local support staff had been recruited. Activities involving the region are now being carried out through United Nations Headquarters in New York.

10. The need for a larger and more stable financial base is acute. In the case of the Lomé Centre, it appears that this condition might be met from voluntary support, providing funding levels increase. The activities of the Lima Centre will remain suspended until adequate support is guaranteed. I strongly support and reiterate the appeals made by the General Assembly to Member States, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals to provide voluntary contributions.

11. In response to the request of the Assembly, I have explored alternative means of financing for the centres. I have begun to foster links between the disarmament and the development sectors of the United Nations system, based on the concept of "no peace without development and no development without peace". There seems to be room for a possible integration of the operational and administrative functioning of the centres with projects and activities of existing United Nations development programmes. Consultations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are under way. I shall report on their outcome to the General Assembly in due course.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRES

A. Regional Centre in Africa

12. The Centre continued to carry out its mandate as contained in General Assembly resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985. While activities continued to be curtailed owing to severe financial constraints, the Centre primarily disseminated information relating to peace, disarmament and security relevant to the African region. It continued to organize monthly informal meetings at its headquarters at which political leaders, representatives of non-governmental organizations, academics and the general public could discuss and propose solutions for issues relating to peace, security and disarmament in Africa. The Centre widened distribution of its bilingual publication The African Peace Bulletin/Bulletin Africain de la Paix which focuses on relevant developments relating to peace, security and disarmament in Africa. The Centre's documentation reference library increased and diversified its holdings through an inter-library loan system linking it with several research and academic institutions.

13. At the invitation of the host Government, the Officer-in-Charge made a presentation on 8 December 1995, entitled "The United Nations faced with peacekeeping challenges" on the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. In addition, the Officer-in-Charge participated in a high-level workshop at Bethanie, Togo, in March 1996. It was organized by the host Government and the Resident Coordinator for Operational Activities of the United Nations System, with the assistance of the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Turin, Italy. A presentation was made on the Regional Centre's mandate and activities. On 7 May 1996, the Centre participated in a Reflection Day on "Education, Violence and Peace" organized by the Institut national des sciences de l'education (INSE) of the University of Benin.

14. In accordance with its mandate, the Centre provided substantive and organizational support to the seventh and eighth ministerial meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held respectively at Brazzaville from 28 August to 1 September 1995, and at Yaoundé from 15 to 19 April 1996.

15. The Centre continued to expand its contacts and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and research and academic institutions, in promotion of its objectives. Visitors to the Centre, who included senior officials from Member States, and academic and research institutions, as well as students and members of the public, were briefed on issues relating to peace and disarmament.

B. Regional Centre in Latin America and the Caribbean

16. Although severe financial constraints influenced the work of the Centre negatively, it was able to carry out, until 30 June 1996, the following activities in accordance with its mandate contained in resolution 41/60 J of 3 December 1986.

17. The Centre published four issues of the Spanish-language Boletín and regularly distributed disarmament and security-related publications of its own or from other United Nations offices throughout the region. The Centre's reference library continued to be used by researchers and students.

18. The Centre cooperated with the United Nations Information Centre in Lima in organizing and convening several special events in connection with the celebration of Disarmament Week in October 1995 and the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It organized an exhibit of United Nations posters, photographs, publications and video films related to disarmament in San Isidro; an art contest for school-age children in the same municipality; and a conference at the University of Lima on "The United Nations in the twenty-first century, a new role and new challenges".

IV. CONCLUSIONS

19. I feel strongly that the mandates of the centres, as established by the General Assembly over a decade ago, not only remain valid but are even more relevant today in view of the growing threats to peace and security in Africa, and of the need to promote the institutionalization of security cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The centres can play a useful role in support of numerous initiatives for conflict prevention and resolution, arms restraint and disarmament, and confidence-building in their respective regions.

20. Provided that new resources could be secured, the activities of the centres could be reviewed, expanded and adapted to support present challenges. Without an adequate and stable resource base, the future viability and effective functioning of the centres will be severely undermined. Insufficient financing continues to make it difficult to maintain them.

21. I wish to appeal strongly once again to Member States, as well as to international and national organizations and foundations, to make substantial contributions to the centres in order to revitalize them and to ensure their effective functioning.

ANNEX

Statement by Mr. Martínez-Morcillo of Spain to the 26th meeting of the First Committee on 17 November 1995

"I am speaking to express the position of the European Union on draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.24, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean", which has just been adopted without a vote. a/ I also speak on behalf of the following countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

"Our countries continue to believe that regional disarmament efforts continue to be important. Consequently, we regret to note that the United Nations Regional Centres in Lomé and Lima have been unable since last year to carry out substantive activities because of a lack of resources, which should have come from voluntary contributions.

"Unfortunately, this is the continuation of a pattern we have seen for a number of years. The draft resolution does not reflect these facts nor does it take into account the Secretary-General's report this year, b/ which makes it clear that the closure of the centres may be dictated by a lack of resources.

"As we see it, it would not be responsible for the First Committee to ignore the grave financial circumstances facing the United Nations, which the Secretary-General has rightly drawn to our attention. We do not feel that we can turn our backs on reality any longer. If, despite our renewed efforts every year, it is not possible to secure financing through voluntary contributions, which will make it possible for the centres to carry out substantive work, then we share the Secretary-General's view that the centres will have to be closed and the activities carried out from United Nations Headquarters. The approach to a draft resolution next year should be reconsidered, therefore, in the light of these circumstances.

"I should like to add that in accordance with the same principles our delegations have joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.31/Rev.1, entitled 'United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific'. This Centre attracts levels of voluntary resources that are sufficient to enable it to carry out valuable work. I request that the text of this explanation of vote be annexed to next year's report of the Secretary-General on these centres."

Notes

a/ Later adopted without a vote by the General Assembly on 12 December 1995 as resolution 50/71 C.

b/ A/50/380.